

FOCUS



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ARMED FORCES GIVEN “FREEDOM” HONOUR

(after Residents’ Party
does U-turn!)

The Princess of Wales’s Royal Regiment were granted the Freedom of the Borough of Epsom & Ewell in January after both national and local press exposed the negative views of the ruling Residents’ Party.

The Residents’ Party (comprising Residents Association councillors) had also voted against holding the “special” meeting which was needed to decide whether or not to bestow the honour. Liberal Democrat support was fundamental to the “special” meeting taking place, public opinion won through and the ruling group took notice of it!

Cllr Jonathan Lees (Stamford), who is also parliamentary candidate for the LibDems said *“The outcome was good but what a great shame the issue became a political debate. Nobody can put a price on the sacrifices made by our armed forces, but recent operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have revealed the disparity between what we expect of our soldiers and how they are rewarded”*

LibDems want action immediately to restore the military covenant between the armed forces and the people. There is dissatisfaction over pay among the lower ranks and this has a dreadful impact on morale and retention.



Jonathan and Vince Cable MP, LibDem Treasury Spokesman

Jonathan reports that over 51,000 (a quarter of the armed forces) receive less in pay than a new recruit police constable or development-level fire-fighter. He says *“Under LibDem proposals no service personnel would receive less than the police constable or fire-fighter. A fully trained Private would receive an average basic hourly wage of £9.44, up from £6.74 per hour.”*

At the moment there is 1 MoD desk job for every 2 servicemen and the LibDems want that ratio reduced. In equipment terms, the pay of all Privates and Lance Corporals could be raised for the price of 4 Eurofighters (unit cost around £70m), Mandelson’s loan of £340m to keep the ailing A400M aircraft going and by diverting other wasted money. Also, 1 Eurofighter would pay a battalion of Privates (400) for a decade : the budget over-run (c. £1bn) on new Destroyers would cover salary increases for five years.

**Contact Jonathan for further details :
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0780 663 2375**

NATIONAL, COUNTY AND BOROUGH-WIDE NEWS ...



At a public meeting in November, the Chief Executive of the Epsom & St Helier Hospital Trust revealed that £70m should be available for redevelopment of the Epsom site, excluding any “third party” support offered by the Denbies Trust. This sum relates solely to the buildings and not the services to be provided within them. The CE confirmed that A & E, children’s services and maternity are all safe. The recent “Local Needs Local Health” review had concluded that Epsom and St Helier should remain merged. Parliamentary candidate Jonathan Lees commented **“It’s good that there is now a clearer plan of what is to happen but it’s a shame it’s taken so long and cost so much to get there — a figure nobody is prepared to state.”** A more detailed review of the public meeting can be found on the November news page of www.epsom-ewell-libdems.org.uk

THANK YOU COUNTY COUNCILLOR !

Epsom had some Christmas lights this year helped along by a portion of Lib Dem county councillor Colin Taylor’s “county allocation”. The borough council’s ruling Residents’ Party steadfastly refuse to donate any money toward brightening our town at Christmas.



CONTINUING TO ENGAGE WITH LOCAL RESIDENTS

Lib Dem councillors organised three public meetings during November and December :

- ◆ On the Tesco proposals for Upper High Street. Numerous questions from local residents were put to Tesco via email and comprehensive replies from them were forwarded on to nearly 100 people and the local press.
- ◆ On the plans for Epsom Station. Questions were put to the developer in a similar way, including concerns about the “drop off” area, taxi ranks, parking and the bulk of the building.
- ◆ On proposals for Horton Water tower, where an open meeting was held on site. The proposals were subsequently refused permission by the Planning Committee.

THE TESCO PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING IS ON THURSDAY 11TH FEBRUARY 2010,
7.30PM AT THE TOWN HALL.

PROGRESS ON PARKING

The first meeting of the Parking Strategy Group, created as a result of pressure from Lib Dem councillors, was held on 4th December. (Cllrs Julie Morris and Colin Taylor are members of this group). Terms of reference have been agreed and another meeting has been set for 26th January. The parking problems in College, Town and Stamford wards particularly (and elsewhere around Epsom) are top priority for your Focus team. Needs of residents, shoppers and businesses need to be considered carefully and there is no “quick fix”. We shall report back in every issue of Focus.

DECISIONS BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

The borough council has signed up to the 10:10 movement but the decision was taken behind closed doors and no-one knew! 10:10 is a campaign which seeks to persuade individuals, businesses, organisations and the UK government to reduce their CO2 emissions by 10% in 2010. When a “senior” RA councillor was asked by a Lib Dem councillor if it would have been better for the matter to have been formally debated and for councillors to have been involved, he gave a one word answer ... “yes”. ***There is a trend for some RA councillors to make decisions behind closed doors, without consultation amongst their own party colleagues and without any regard for the due democratic process. In political language, is this a dictatorship? RA councillors are out of touch with local opinion and now, it seems, with their own party colleagues as well.***



SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES

Bad weather may encourage us to walk to local shops which need our support more than ever (taking a reusable bag with us of course!). Lib Dem councillors attend the Business Partnership Board, which is setting up a newsletter for local businesses and wants to increase recycling from shops, restaurants and businesses (not catered for by the council’s domestic recycling services). The Lib Dems have been successful in persuading the council to run adverts from local businesses in its magazine “Insight”

WARD NEWS ...



WHY OUR SALT BINS ARE EMPTY

Cllr Anna Jones has been chasing this up since the summer after being told by Surrey County Council that the number of full bins would be reduced. "This doesn't make sense" she says "as salt bins are vital to the effective running of our roads in poor weather. Most of the bins in College ward have been filled but bin 58, on the corner of **Burgh Heath Road** and **Beech Road**, hasn't been filled for years". SCC has decided to reduce the number of bins which has led to increasing demand on the remaining ones. Many residents live on hills. Residents of **The Ridings** area really struggle when it snows. "SCC need to rethink this measure and if anything increase the number of salt bins" concludes Anna.

Road safety measures on their way

As well as some parking restrictions planned for around the Junior School entrance, Anna and Cllr Julie Morris have been chasing up better signage for the bend at the **Wallace Fields/Windmill Lane** junction. Some white posts have been erected on the verge and they can confirm that a new sign should be erected before the end of March.

STREET LIGHT PROBLEMS ...

Cllr Christine Key continues to report, progress and coordinate street light problems in our area and signs them off only when working properly. This can take many months because of the county council system of repairing them. You can report a faulty street light via www.surreycc.gov.uk, or by telephoning 03456 009009 for general enquiries, or 0300 2001003 for the roads and transport team. Let Christine know and she will log the fault.



... AND POTHOLES

Julie reported seven potholes over a two-day period, just before the first snowfall in January. "There were three in **Bridge Road** alone" she says "and a huge one by the Dairy in **Church Road** which was getting bigger on a daily basis". Another large area had opened up near to the mini-roundabout in **Tattenham Corner Road**. Local residents can report potholes as well — see numbers in the above article. Anna has been successful in getting 6 potholes in **Burgh Heath Road** repaired (with 20 more to go!)



*Following complaints from local residents, a new (and smaller) sign has been made for **Alexandra Recreation Ground** and has been erected behind the public seat. A great team effort achieved results : bombarding council officials with emails and refusing to give up on what local residents wanted was obviously the right strategy!*

Dead trees MUST be felled

For the second year running, Julie has reported the dead trees in the centre of the **Elizabeth Welchman Garden**. Last year (2008/9) there was apparently no money to deal with them and they are on a list of the lowest priority trees. This year, they are still on this list but Julie is hopeful they will be removed by the end of March. Replacing them may take much longer, but these dead trees shed limbs occasionally and need to be removed on grounds of safety.

ACTION ON THE DERBY ARMS SITE

The council's enforcement officer has been busy trying to get improvements to the business operating next door to the Derby Arms. Hedge replanting has been agreed, signage reduced and some other issues are on-going.

CYCLING FROM PILLAR TO POST!

Anna, Christine and Julie are still on the case to get a better deal for cyclists. Anna's Motion about creating a "Year of the Bike" failed to get support from the Residents' Party, but having been debated at the Environment Committee, then at a Full Council meeting, it has now been pushed sideways to the Leisure Committee to discuss. The lifespan of this topic will ultimately be almost nine months : it is no surprise people complain about council bureaucracy and that they don't understand how decisions are made and why they take so long.



MORE WARD NEWS ...

ENVIRONMENTAL VISUAL AUDITS (EVA)

The Police are charged with conducting EVA's across the borough : these are basically walkabout activities to spot problems of things like potholes, graffiti, overhanging branches, etc. Julie went with the Epsom & Ewell South neighbourhood policing team on their December EVA along with a council officer from its "streetcare" department. Julie says "I was surprised to learn of these EVA's because it seems to be much the same thing as we do during our mobile surgeries. It's useful to have a council officer with you though, because they can record problems and action them first hand."

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If you want to visit India, first visit <http://ashextourism.com> for the holiday of a lifetime.



Welcome to the Epsom Freecycle group!

The Freecycle Network™ is made up of 4873 groups with 6892862 members across the globe. It's a grassroots and entirely nonprofit movement of people who are giving (and getting) stuff for free in their own towns and thus keeping good stuff out of landfills.

Membership is free and everything posted must be FREE, legal and appropriate for all ages. To view the items being given away or sought in Epsom, you must be a member of the local group.

Join at: <http://groups.freecycle.org/Epsom>

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households in Epsom and Ewell,
four times each year.***

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***SEND US YOUR IDEAS AND GRUMBLES
Epsom & Ewell LibDems (College),
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